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**Labor and Public Employees Committee
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SB 1177 An Act Concerning One Fair Wage

Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committees. My name is Keri Hoehne, I live in Torrington, and I am Executive Vice President of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 371. I also worked as a waitress for six years. I am here today to in support of SB 1177 An Act Concerning One Fair Wage.

Our union represents workers in retail food and food processing, but we also represent over two hundred tipped workers at Foxwoods Casino. While Foxwoods is not subject to our state laws, we have seen firsthand the challenges that come with a subminimum wage for servers and bartenders, and we have seen that as a result of an increase in the minimum wage, Foxwoods was compelled to dramatically raise their wages in bargaining for their non-tipped workers.

Our members must pay their taxes, health insurance premiums, and retirement contributions out of their paychecks, which consist of only the subminimum wage. That means that more times than not, they receive a “zero” paycheck, and sometimes still have to pay out of pocket for their benefits.

Our employers often make the most desirable shifts for tips only available to part time or flex workers. Our members often have to choose between full time work on an overnight shift with very low tips because they need the health benefits, or part -time work on the busy shifts because they need to make the tips. When they choose the latter- who do you think pays for their family benefits? Most times, we do as taxpayers, because they are forced to a part time job on a busy shift to make enough money to feed their families instead of taking a full- time job with benefits with the lower pay. This means that like many laws that unfairly benefit employers, the taxpayers of CT are subsidizing businesses.

When I was waitressing my way through college, I was paid \$3.89 per hour, which was 61% of minimum wage. The rest of my income was earned through tips from the wealthy Northwest Connecticut patrons. It wasn't so bad, since I was living at home and only trying to raise enough for my books and extra living expenses while in high school and college. I bring this up though, because twenty years later, the subminimum wage is \$6.38, which is only 45% of the current minimum wage. In two decades, we have cut waitresses' base pay by 16%!

Connecticut is a state that has a history of valuing its working families. Now is the time to prove it once again supporting tipped workers by eliminating the subminimum wage. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.